



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 3, 2003

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman

SUBJECT: Approval of Code of Ethics for Michigan Educators

It is stated in the Revised School Code, Act 451 of 1976, that a teaching certificate is valid only if the following oath or affirmation is: signed, notarized, and a copy filed with the superintendent of schools of the school district in which the teacher expects to teach.

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the constitution of the United States of America and the constitution of the state of Michigan and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of teacher according to the best of my ability."

This oath has stood alone as the only descriptor of the teacher's responsibility to the citizens of Michigan. The job of teacher has many assumptions attached to it and in the most recent federal legislation, No Child Left Behind, additional articulation of being highly qualified is now mandated. The members of the Professional Standards Commission for Teachers (PSCT) identified a void in relationship to stated expectations for the job of teacher. After identifying this void and searching for a set of statements that are descriptive of the ethics that the job of teacher embraces, members of the PSCT propose the use of the attached document as a Michigan Professional Educator's Code of Ethics (Attachment A).

The PSCT members began this work with the belief that society has charged public education with trust and responsibility that requires the highest ideals and quality of professional educator's service. The development and review process of this Code of Ethics for Michigan Educators began in 2002. After researching the use of a code of ethics in other similar professions a draft of the Code of Ethics for Michigan Educators and a request for response was distributed to educational organizations, schools, and other interested parties for informal feedback. The Code of Ethics was also presented at information sessions conducted at eight regional sites across the state in the spring of 2003. The results from this review were overwhelmingly positive. The Professional Standards Commission for Teachers approved the Michigan Professional Educator's Code of Ethics at its November 6, 2003 meeting.

The following ethical standards address the professional educator's commitment to the student and the profession. The Code of Ethics is presented to the State Board of Education as a position statement regarding the values that are supported as a statement of the ethical practice of Michigan's professional educators. The PSCT members believe that this Co of Ethics will serve the State Board of Education's goal of Ensuring Excellent Educators for Michigan's children. The commission members chose to align these statements with elements from Michigan's Democratic Core Values. The PSCT members also believe this Code has a natural connection with the teacher's oath that appears on the back of Michigan teaching certificates.

Commission members offer several possible suggestions regarding how this Code of Ethics may be used to promote excellence in Michigan teachers. This Code of Ethics:

1. highlights for all adults involved in PreK-16 educational arenas an agreed upon set of ethical principles to guide decisions;
2. provides a consistent framework for thinking about the societal benefits of quality teachers;
3. raises professional educators' awareness of the responsibility they carry when accepting a teaching certificate and/or position which involves touching the lives of students in Michigan's educational systems;
4. makes a professional educator's ethical commitment transparent to the general public; and
5. facilitates awareness and discussion for both pre-service and in-service educators on ethical standards.

It is recommended that the State Board of Education:

1. approve the Code of Ethics for Michigan Educators as a companion document to the teacher oath to articulate the ethical standards to which professional educators are expected to adhere in their job performance; and
2. direct the Superintendent of Public Instruction to disseminate the Code of Ethics for Michigan Educators to Michigan schools, professional organizations, and other interested parties as discussed in the Superintendent's memorandum dated December 3, 2003.

Michigan Professional Educator's Code of Ethics

Preamble: Society has charged public education with trust and responsibility that requires of professional educators the highest ideals and quality service.

The Michigan State Board of Education adopts this Code of Ethics to articulate the ethical standards to which professional educators are expected to adhere in their job performance.

Ethical Standards: The following ethical standards address the professional educator's commitment to the student and the profession.

1. *Service toward common good*

Ethical Principle: The professional educator's primary goal is to support the growth and development of all learners for the purpose of creating and sustaining an informed citizenry in a democratic society.

2. *Mutual respect*

Ethical principle: Professional educators respect the inherent dignity and worth of each individual.

3. *Equity*

Ethical principle: Professional educators advocate the practice of equity. The professional educator advocates for equal access to educational opportunities for each individual.

4. *Diversity*

Ethical principle: Professional educators promote cross-cultural awareness by honoring and valuing individual differences and supporting the strengths of all individuals to ensure that instruction reflects the realities and diversity of the world.

5. *Truth and honesty*

Ethical principle: Professional educators uphold personal and professional integrity and behave in a trustworthy manner. They adhere to acceptable social practices, current state law, state and national student assessment guidelines, and exercise sound professional judgment.